

Early March, winter nearly over. Ludo still following scheme I do not understand: found him reading *Metamorphoses* the other day though he is only up to *Odyssey* 22. Seems to have slowed down on *Odyssey*, has only been reading 100 lines or so a day for past few weeks. Too tired to think of new places to go, where is there besides National Gallery National Portrait Gallery Tate Whitechapel British Museum Wallace Collection that is free? Financially in fairly good position as have typed *Advanced Angling* 1969–present, *Mother and Child* 1952–present, *You and Your Garden* 1932–1989, *British Home Decorator* 1961–present, *Horn & Hound* 1920–1976, and am now making good progress with *The Poodle Breeder*, 1924–1982. Have made virtually no progress with Japanese.

Another argument about Cunliffe. L: Why can't we go to the National Gallery again?

I: You promised you wouldn't go through doors marked Authorised Personnel Only.

L: It didn't say Authorised Personnel Only. It said Staff.

I: Exactly. In other words people who worked there, because the people who work there want to get on with their work without being disturbed by people who don't work there. If at some stage you decide to reject the theory of a Ludocentric universe do let me know.

We go to Tower Hill to catch a Circle Line train. The Circle Line is experiencing delays, so we sit down & I discover that Ludo has



smuggled *Kalilah wa Dimnah* into the pushchair. He takes it out and starts reading, turning the pages quickly—the vocabulary is pretty easy and repetitive, should really have picked something harder but too late now.

A woman comes up & stares & admires & comments, How on earth did you teach so young a child?

She says she has a five-year-old herself & presses me for my methods which I explain, such as they are, & she says surely there must be more to it than that.

L: I know French and Greek and Arabic and Hebrew and Latin and I'm going to start Japanese when I finish this book and the *Odyssey*.

[What?]

L: I had to read 8 books of the *Metamorphoses* and 30 stories in the *Thousand & One Nights* and I Samuel and the Book of Jonah and learn the cantillation and do 10 chapters of *Algebra Made Easy* and now I just have to finish this book and one book of the *Odyssey*.

[What!!!!?]

My admirer says that's wonderful & that it's so important for small children to have a sense of achievement, & then drawing me slightly aside says that all the same it's important to keep a sense of proportion, one needs to strike a balance, dangerous to carry things to extremes, moderation in all things, not that she means to interfere.

By the looks of things I have about three days' grace before I start teaching Japanese to a child with no sense of proportion whatsoever.

My admirer is still hovering & hesitating, having struck a blow for moderation she says something or other about her own child who is no genius.

I say What about French, she might like to learn French & she says I know it sounds awful but I haven't the time.

I say she is probably expecting too much, why not teach her just



one word a day & let her colour it in in a book wherever she finds it, the secret of success is to complete a single simple task on a daily basis.

Is that what you did? she asks looking awestruck at *Kalilah wa Dimnah* (which is completely ridiculous as it is a very easy text, far too easy in my opinion).

No, I say. But it is still the best method.

Two Circle Line trains came and went and a District Line train pulled in and pulled out on its way to Upminster. She said But how did you get him to do all that work and I explained about the five words and the Schwan Stabilo highlighter & she said Yes but there must be more to it than that, there must be more to it than that—

so that I could not help thinking of things I would rather not think about, such as how hard it is to be nice and how hard it was going to be to be nice.

She seemed to be really interested because now a Barking train came and went and still she was here. She said what she meant was for example she had studied Latin herself, well if you teach a child French the simple task could be a word whereas in an inflected language the grammar was so frightfully complicated surely beyond the grasp of a four-year-old child.

I said I thought small children liked matching things up, it was not that big a deal, I just explained that the words had to match and he could see that they matched, though of course it probably made more sense when he got used to the idea.

She was smiling sympathetically. What a nice thing to explain to a four-year-old child.

I had not planned to give him a whole declension on the first day as I knew very well what Mr. Ma would think. L seemed to be having such a good time colouring in words with his highlighter, though, and it is always such a relief when a small child finds some-



thing to do that it is happy to go on doing, that I wrote out some tables for him (including the dual), with the comforting reflection that Mr. Ma was not there to see it.

I had to consult the dictionary to make sure of finding all the dialect forms and in the end he had lots and lots and lots of words that he could colour in and that was nice.

I told him he could colour in any of the words that he found & then I went back to John Denver leaving *Iliad* 1–12 on the chair.

Four or five hours went by. After a while I looked up and he was doing something on the floor. I went over to him and he smiled up at me. He had gone back to the beginning of *Iliad* 1 in my Oxford Classical Text, and he had highlighted his five words *and* all occurrences of the definite article all the way to the end of *Iliad* 12, so that every page had blocks of green scattered over it.

He said Where is Volume II? I need to finish this.

I said patiently after a short pause I don't know where it is, I was looking for it earlier, and I added patiently Perhaps you should learn some more words and go back over Volume I again instead. You could use a different colour. If you need more practice you can go on to Volume II.

He said All right. Can I have ten words this time?

I said Natürlich. You can have as many as you want. This is tremendously good. I thought it would be too hard for you.

He said Of course it's not too hard for me.

& I looked again at the coloured page and I said

And DON'T YOU DARE colour in ANY OTHER BOOK without ASKING ME FIRST.

That was all I said, & it was too much. A chattering Alien bursts from the breast to devour your child before your eyes. He looked down at the page,

& I returned to my work and he returned to his work.

I had tried to be patient and kind but this was not very nice.



A week went by. I have heard it said that small children have no powers of concentration. What in God's name is to keep a small child from concentrating on something? L anyway was a monomaniac. He would leap out of bed at 5:00 in the morning, put on four or five sweaters, go downstairs to get out his eight Schwan Stabilo highlighters and get to work. At about 6:30 or so he would rush upstairs to report on his progress waving a fluorescent page in my face and I disapproving of the type of parent who fobs a child off with Wonderful Wonderful would murmur Wonderful and then disarmed by a face like a new penny ask questions. Elephant stampede up and down stairs for a couple of hours & time to get up.

A week as I say went by. One day I snatched a few moments from typing to read Ibn Battuta & L came up and just looked. He didn't say anything. I knew what this meant: it meant for all my good intentions I had not been very nice. So I said: Would you like to learn it? And he naturally said he would so I went through the whole procedure again, and I gave him a little animal fable to read in *Kalilah wa Dimnah*. And now each night I would look up the next twenty words in each book and write them down for him so that it would not be so boring for him at 5:00 in the morning.

Four days went by. I tried to be careful but you can't always be careful and one day I went to look something up in Isaiah. I got out my Tanach and he came over and looked and that was that.





I am reading *Let's Learn Kana—the EASY Way!!!!* L is reading *Jock of the Bushveld*.

	あ a	い i	う u	え e	お o
k	か ka	き ki	く ku	け ke	こ ko
g	が ga	ぎ gi	ぐ gu	げ ge	ご go
s	さ sa	し shi	す su	せ se	そ so
z	ざ za	じ ji	ず zu	ぜ ze	ぞ zo
t	た ta	ち chi	つ tsu	て te	と to
d	だ da	ぢ ji	づ zu	で de	ど do
n	な na	に ni	ぬ nu	ね ne	の no
h	は ha	ひ hi	ふ fu	へ he	ほ ho
b	ば ba	び bi	ぶ bu	べ be	ぼ bo
p	ぱ pa	ぴ pi	ぷ pu	ぺ pe	ぽ po
m	ま ma	み mi	む mu	め me	も mo
y	や ya		ゆ yu		よ yo
r	ら ra	り ri	る ru	れ re	ろ ro
	わ wa				を o
	ん -n				



I try to imagine presenting this to a small child.

て かった いん て はった  
Te Katta In Te Hatta

ほっぽ おん ぽっぽ  
Hoppo On Poppo

This is not going to work.



